

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 2THE WASHINGTON STAR (GREEN LINE)
18 January 1980

Byrd Urges That U.S. Sell Military Goods to Chinese

By Lisa Myers

Washington Star Staff Writer

Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd urged yesterday that the United States sell military equipment to the People's Republic of China.

The West Virginia Democrat said in an interview that the Soviet incursion makes it even more clear that a strong China is in the national security interest of this country. He said the United States should do whatever possible to strengthen China economically and militarily, including selling arms to them. He previously has favored accelerating normalization relations with China.

Byrd also recommended the establishment of mutual defense arrangements with Middle East oil-producing nations, which are endangered by the Soviet thrust toward the Persian Gulf. Although he would not specify which countries he had in mind, those frequently mentioned in regard to such defense arrangements are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman and Bahrain.

Byrd said that despite budget constraints, Congress should also be prepared to increase military aid to promote continued progress toward a comprehensive Egyptian-Israeli peace accord and to shore up NATO's vulnerable southern flank. He again called for more aid to Turkey, which he said is "drowning." Another leading candidate for more U.S. assistance is Egypt, which Byrd said "is proving to be a strong, courageous ally."

The Democratic leader, who in the past has criticized President Carter for not being tough enough with the Kremlin, praised his handling of the Iran and Afghanistan crises "up to this point." But he was disturbed that the administration was not better prepared to deal with the confrontations, particularly from a military standpoint. "We should have been better prepared a long time ago to deal with situations that may require some conventional force," he asserted.

When the Senate returns Tuesday, it will address itself immediately to problems highlighted by events in Iran and Afghanistan, Byrd said. To speed action in this area, the majority leader has canceled all but two days of a scheduled week-long recess in February.

He predicted prompt approval of the administration's proposed \$400 million aid package to Pakistan. He

also said that Congress will substantially increase defense spending to establish new military bases in the Middle East, set up the proposed Rapid Deployment Force, improve conventional forces and upgrade strategic nuclear forces. Legislation to free the CIA from limitations imposed by Congress in recent years also is likely, he said.

On the domestic front, Byrd predicted there would be legislation to aid farmers hurt by the grain embargo against the Soviet Union. He said he also hopes Congress will give the president more flexibility to deal with potential energy shortages by lowering the trigger for imposition of gasoline rationing. Legislation approved last year forbids the president from invoking his standby rationing authority unless there is an oil shortfall of 20 percent. Byrd wants the threshold lowered to 5 percent.

Byrd said that the international situation may curtail the amount of domestic legislation that the Senate will be able to consider this year. But he said there is a "very good" chance that the Senate will approve health insurance legislation being written by Sen. Russell B. Long, D-La., and his Finance Committee. He said that for budgetary reasons, any health insurance bill will have to be limited to protecting Americans against the financial devastation of catastrophic illness and to revamping Medicaid and Medicare coverage for the poor and elderly.

Byrd said he personally will push for a package to aid small business through the reduction of the burden of federal regulation and through other, unspecified actions. He wrote a letter to the president earlier this week urging an administration proposal on this subject.

The majority leader indicated that a tax cut also is a possibility if the economy deteriorates. He emphasized that any reduction would have to be designed to improve productivity and reduce inflationary pressures.

STAT